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# UNIT 1 DEFINITION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS : ITS NATURE, PROCESS AND PUBLIC

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit, we introduce you to Public Relations (PR), its nature, scope and process. We will begin by defining the term “Public Relations” and other associated terms. We will define who the publics are, how important they are, how one can communicate with them. In short, we will take a wide look at what Public Relations does for the organisation, the publics and the management. When you complete reading this unit, you should be able to :

- state the factors that have contributed to the need for Public Relations;
- define Public Relations to bring out the various functions it serves;
- explain various terms used in Public Relations context;
- describe the nature and purpose of Public Relations;
- map out the scope of Public Relations and its limitations;
- relate the role of Public Relations to management function;
- define ‘public’ and analyse the nature of publics;
- identify the publics of various organisations;
- list the tools and media available to a Public Relations person;
- describe how Public Relations can bring about mutual understanding through strategic communication; and

- explain how the changing environment poses an increasingly greater challenge for the Public Relations professional in India.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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This is the first block in this Course. It comprises five Units. In this block, we shall be dealing with the basics of Public Relations.

In Unit 1, we shall discuss the various important definitions of Public Relations, its nature, and various processes and procedures used in Public Relations.

In the next Unit, *i.e.* Unit 2, we shall be dealing with various concepts in Public Relations.

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## 1.2 THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ENVIRONMENT

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We will now focus more sharply on the environment in which Public Relations operates and also examine how Public Relations has become a necessity in the present society.

As science gives us greater control over matter, machines, and methods, we must learn to deal with people with increasing effectiveness. Public Relations, as a means of inculcating attitudes, can greatly expedite the social adaptations required for our material advancement by influencing public opinion.

The revolution in communication, that we referred to earlier, is more than an accelerator of change. It has created a whole new pattern of human dynamics. Changes are being felt in various areas of the society, particularly in the lifestyles and attitudes. For, the current changes in society are basically because of shifts in public attitudes, whether they be in government, in business, education, in science or technology. It is because of this that Public Relations is rapidly gaining attention worldwide.

In India also, the new leadership in all organisations, government or private, has become aware of the importance of public attitudes. Some are either aware of Public Relations, or are receptive when it comes to their attention. As they gradually replace the old guard, the significance and dynamism of the concept of Public Relations is likely to increase in scope and effect. The changes will create a human climate in which all organisations must exist. Understanding and coping with the human climate is as vital for an organisation as dealing with the weather is for a farmer. In true democratic traditions, today's organisations and institutions, political parties and associations, the church or the temple, groups and unions, all work with the avowed aim of serving the interests of the people. Therefore, the people's attitude towards these social groups gain importance. Public Relations acts as a "link", placed as it is between an organisation and the people.

Further, the process of development in society creates certain problems. The resolving of these problems require the mutual understanding the goodwill between many groups, often having conflicting interests. As long as these societal processes operate, Public Relations holds great promise for the future.

Therefore, the purpose of Public Relations practice is to establish a two-way communication to resolve conflicts of interest by seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest, and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information.

The scale of activity to promote good Public Relations may vary considerably according to the size and nature of the interested parties, but the philosophy, the strategy and the methods remain very similar, whether the Public Relations programme is designed to influence international understanding or to improve relations between a local company and its customers, agents and employees.

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## 1.3 DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Attempts at defining the concept of Public Relations have resulted in people primarily referring to one or a few elements, or describing only a few of the many functions that "Public Relations" performs.

Let us first clarify the meaning and definition of the term "Public Relations".

**Definition of Public Relations :  
Its Nature, Process and Public**

We will take up a few of the major definitions given by eminent persons in the field.

Examine the dictionary meaning of PR : In its threefold definition of the term, the third edition of Webster's New International Dictionary describes Public Relations as:

- "the promotion of rapport and goodwill between a firm or institution and other persons, special publics or the community at large, through the distribution of interpretative material / development of neighbourly interchange, and the assessment of publics";
- "the degree of understanding and goodwill achieved between an individual, organisation or institution and the publics";
- "the art or science of developing reciprocal understanding and goodwill".

Now, look at some well known definitions of Public Relations.

One of the earliest definitions of the term is coined by Denny Griswold, publisher of "Public Relations News", a pioneer newsletter of Public Relations.

"Public Relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an organisation with the public interest, and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance."

The above definition places responsibility for the Public Relations function upon the shoulders of management,

The term "management" is used broadly, to cover all managements, and applies to non-profit as well as profit-making institutions and organisations. Further, the function and process are tied together in an orderly fashion to provide a step by step analysis or Public Relations in action.

Another important definition is by two American Public Relations professionals, Scot M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, authors of the famous book "Effective Public Relations". They say :

"Public Relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance, based upon mutually satisfactory two-way communication".

The Institute of Public Relations in the UK devoted prolonged attention to evolving a comprehensive definition of Public Relations. Their exercise yielded a definition, which now generally finds favour with Public Relations practitioners in many parts of the world, including the majority of practitioners in India. According to the Institute, Public Relations is defined as :

"the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its public".

Sam Black in "Practical Public Relations" says that, "the fundamental purpose of Public Relations practice is to establish a two-way flow of mutual understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information".

Edward L. Bernays, the doyen of Public Relations in USA, defines it as "the attempt by information, persuasion and adjustment to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement or institution."

An interesting and modern definition of Public Relations is the Mexican statement made at an International Conference of Public Relations institutions held in Mexico City in 1978.

"Public Relations practice is the art of social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation and the public interest".

This is a very helpful and practical definition. First of all, it introduces the need for research, to audit or assess the situation, and to consider the implications of what is discovered. Second, it stresses the advisory role of Public Relations, its service to management. Third, it shows that Public Relations programmes must be planned. Finally, it states that PR action must not only benefit its sponsors, but must also be in public interest, that is it should be socially responsible.

D.S. Mehta defines Public Relations "as an attempt, through information, persuasion, adjustment, and contacts, to seek support for some activity, cause, movement, institution, product or service".

### **1.3.1 Analysis of Definitions**

Having gone through these definitions, you will find that though they may differ in their emphasis on certain elements, they have a great deal in common. Let us see what Public Relations is as seen in these definitions :

- A planned effort or management function.
- The relationship between an organisation and its publics.
- Evaluation of public attitudes and opinions.
- An organisation's policies, procedures, and action as they relate to its publics.
- Steps taken to ensure that these policies, procedures and actions are in the public interest and socially responsible.
- Execution of an action and/or communication programme.
- Development of rapport, goodwill, understanding and acceptance through a two-way communication. This analysis should be helpful to you in identifying the purpose, functions and the scope of Public Relations itself.

To avoid confusion in terminology it would be better to differentiate Public Relations from other elements or functions that it performs. It would be worthwhile to keep in mind these working definitions of terms that are likely to be used in the course of discussion.

### **1.3.2 Working Definitions**

**Professional Public Relations** : The art of convincing people that they should adopt a certain attitude or pursue a certain course of action; usually associated with management.

**Profession** : Practice of a skilled art or service based on training, a body of knowledge, and adherence to agreed-on standards of ethics and procedures.

**Public** : A group of people who have a common interest, goal, vocation and occupation.

**Managing** : The art of conducting an enterprise or programme in the interest of the publics, owners, and management and in accord with policy

**Policy** : The plan by which management sets out to accomplish its objectives.

**Mass Media** : Vehicles of communication designed to convey information, ideas and impressions to many people simultaneously; *e.g.* newspapers, magazines, television, radio, motion pictures.

**Advertising** : Use of a hired or paid medium of communication, such as a mass medium for conveying a message, information of a product or service. Although, it is basically a function of sales, advertising is regarded as an important tool of public relations.

**Lobbying** : The attempt to influence the voting behaviour of legislators on behalf of specific interests or causes.

**News** : Information about current events — accidental, incidental, or planned.

**Publicity** : Dissemination of purposefully planned and executed messages — *e.g.* news releases, articles, features through selected media to further to particular interest of an organisation or person, without specific payment to media. Publicity is a significant tool of Public Relations.

**Press-agentry** : Creating news events of a transient nature, often of a sensational or attention-catching nature.



These steps are taken to reach a goal: to convince people that they should adopt a certain attitude or pursue a certain course of action.

To perform this feat, public relations must begin at the heart of the organisation it serves — the management. It must find the answer to these three questions :

- What is the message that the management wants to impart?
- To whom?
- How?

And a fourth question is implied in these three: What is the purpose? These questions, although innocent-looking require great deal of thought. It is no good to engage in some Public Relations activity in spurt because someone else is doing it. Public Relations activity has to be a planned and sustained programme with the goals worked out clearly.

Without knowing what, whom, how, and why, a public relations programme can serve no purpose. A purposeful Public Relations programme should :

- 1) Understand the organisation's nature and purpose thoroughly;
- 2) Communicate this understanding to others, *i.e.*, the publics;
- 3) Observe and evaluate the effect of the communication.

As a consequence of public relations activity on this sound base, management can gain the opportunity, to make such internal changes in the organisation, product, service, or method as will enable it to survive and prosper in a public climate of goodwill.

#### **1.4.1 Elements in Public Relations**

Briefly, Public Relations involves four major elements. They are inter-related and overlapping. In fact, one tends to lead to another. These are :

- a) Two-way Communication;
- b) Mutual Understanding;
- c) Caring for Public Opinion;
- d) Social Responsibility.

##### **a) Two-way Communication**

Public Relations philosophy puts great emphasis on the need for two-way communication. It is now fairly well accepted that feedback is important. How does one set it?

Many misunderstandings spring from a total lack of or an inadequate communication. The foremost objective in any public relations programme, therefore, is to improve existing channels of communication and to establish two-way flow of information. However, this is not as easy as it sounds! Even if you have a strong desire to communicate, there may be great difficulties in achieving success because of the barriers in communication process.

Many of the human problems in organisation are ascribed to lack of communication. Managements are constantly advised to give prompt and regular information to employees and the public. Public Relations methods can do much to resolve such conflicts to reconcile differences or even as a preventive measure but let nobody underestimate the difficulties involved.

##### **b) Mutual Understanding**

Mutual understanding requires, by definition, a two-way communication. A Public Relations policy for any organisation, for example, should include both inward activity and intelligence to assess the policies and behaviour of the management, to see whether action is necessary to improve the organisation's image; and outward activity to inform the public about its achievement. You may be curious about one point— where does the question of 'mutual interest arise' ? In any public relationship, there are at least two parties involved. First, there is the organisation which has something to promote, often in competition with others. Second, there are the "publics" to which the organisation directs its efforts.

Thus, there are two interests to be met : The private interest and the public interest. Generally, these interests are often in conflict. Each party interprets the public interest in terms of its own self — interests. Let us take an example of a manufacturing industry. It is exposed to pressures from different sides. The consumer who wants to pay the lowest price for the goods he needs. The worker who wants the highest wage of salary for producing goods. The stockholder who wants the maximum dividend or profit for his investment in the machinery used to make the goods. The government which wants you to pay the sales and excise taxes on the goods you are selling. Each group has its own interests in mind. Resolving these conflicts of interests is the essential part of Public Relations because satisfying those interests is essential to the enduring success of the organisation. This can only be done by achieving "mutual understanding" between the organisation and all these interests. For this two-way communication is necessary by providing information to the people and seek "public favour" through an informed "public opinion".

**e) Caring for Public Opinion**

Public opinion has been described as the "source spring" of Public Relations. Public opinion, is the consensus of individual opinions of the majority among the masses, based on their attitudes and widely held beliefs, moulded by public interest. Abraham Lincoln once said : "Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed". Public Relations practice requires ungrudging and unwavering faith in the wisdom of an informed public opinion. Public Relations provides the necessary information to various public interest groups, in the interests of the organisations. Satisfying the public interest, to the "mutual" advantage of all parties in conflict, is a basic requirement of sound Public Relations. Arriving at this definition of mutual interests requires satisfactory two-way communication as a pre-requisite to achieving goodwill.

As mentioned earlier, public opinion impinges on an organisation at many levels : with official bodies; contacts with stockholders; relations with distributors, wholesalers, etc.; reactions of buyers or consumers; and internal relations with employees. In all these fields there is a need for constant endeavour to establish and maintain mutual understanding and to keep a watch for possible cause of disharmony. Dissent and murmurs should not be ignored. The basic problem is to adjust the relationships of an organisation to serve both public and private interests and make it "socially responsible".

**A PRO must be a good listener**

Many crises occur due to communication breakdown. This can happen due to lack of communication for inadequacy of such communication which has not satisfied the information needs of the receiver. To assess the information needs of the public it is important to be a good listener. A piece of gossip can generate a rumour. A rumour unchecked can bring the production machinery to a standstill and cost the organisation dearly. If only one had cared to listen, one could have possibly also detected the first murmurs of discontent and perhaps prevented the labour strike.

It, therefore, pays to listen. Listening helps to get feedback on what others are thinking. Hence, apart from formal surveys for feedback, one should also hope information of interpersonal communication with the publics and opinion leader for feedback. It may yield useful tips.

**d) Social Responsibility**

The social responsibility of any organisation stems from what has been discussed earlier—that all organisations work in the name of the people with the main aim of serving their interests. For the organisation to profit or gain through its efforts, it has necessarily to first achieve the acceptance and approval of the people for its role. Many organisations, through getting profit from society, do not show their concern for the latter's welfare and thereby end up having problems. Public Relations seeks to attune itself to the needs and aspirations of the community it serves and identifies the interests of the organisation with that of the community's e.g. participating in festivals, sponsoring local sports events instituting scholarships, bus shelters, promoting local causes, etc. This is the social responsibility role of Public Relations.

**1.4.2 Scope of Public Relations Practice**

What is the scope of Public Relations ? Stated simply, Public Relations consists of a number

**Definition, Nature, Ethics and Scope of Public Relations**

of little things and a few big things. It is the daily application of common sense, common courtesy, and common decency. It is doing a lot of favours to others, so that they will be inclined to do favours to you. It can be just entertaining a visitor to your organisation, or it can be as important as providing counsel and advice that leads management to solve a crucial strike situation. It can be organising a health camp for the children of the employees of your organisation or it could be the formulation of a communication campaign to face the society at large, as in the case of Union Carbide's Bhopal gas tragedy. It could be just writing a letter to a parent whose child was reprimanded for neglecting studies, or providing information to potential investors in your company. It can be snuffing out a spark or putting out a big bonfire. Public Relations is a multitude of things.

Much of what is usually labeled as Public Relations is actually "publicity" — the dissemination of facts, ideas about individuals and institutions for various purposes, such as to attract attention, gain prestige, publicize products, or to satisfy public interest in an institution or for an individual. Often, people tend to confuse the publicity tool with the broader aspect of Public Relations. Public Relations practice is still concerned with getting publicity, for somebody or something. Many Public Relations practitioners do little else. But publicity, a one-way proposition, is not Public Relations. It is only a tool of Public Relations. The two should not be confused.

Likewise, "corporate communication" and "corporate relations" are clearly limited to the "corporate sector" — the field of industry, trade and business. It relates to customer-investor relationships and is used in corporate-sponsored reports. While Public Relations' scope extends to policy and strategy and counselling managements, "corporate relations" is limited to the company's relationships with specific target groups, among clients, stockholders, commercial interest groups and sometimes liaising with government officials to secure mutually acceptable objectives, the last falling in the area of "public affairs", another term which impinges on the scope of Public Relations, all these terms are functional in nature. Choice of a term that deals with a function labels its practitioners as technicians and not as "professionals".

The broadness and non-specificity of the term "public relations" prevents it from becoming associated with any one type of function. As it is a general word, it remains suitable an "umbrella" term covering many types of functions that it performs. Public Relations, more accurately defined and described, would include the following, if we were to be referring to an industrial organisation, for example :

- Creating publicity for the organisation, its products and services
- Employee publications like a house journal
- General Body meeting reports
- Preparation of booklets, pamphlets
- Advertising
- Community work, corporate donations
- Public - speaking
- Radio and TV programmes
- Direct mail
- Arranging, exhibitions, Tours, Open Houses
- Training employees in customer relations
- Answering queries from media and public; issuing of press releases
- Making films, documentaries, video
- Company policy formulation
- Interacting with legislators and government
- Company correspondence
- Personal calls
- Sales training
- Promotion



- Attending and arranging of special events, parties, etc.

The broad variety and scope of Public Relations functions, ranging from doing small favours for people, being just visible in a social gathering, to devising a broader strategy to gain public favour, can encompass many things that come under the “umbrella” term of Public Relations. But one thing should be borne in mind. No two Public Relations practitioner’s programmes or functions are exactly the same. They differ from organisation to organisation and person to person.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

**Note :** i) Tick the correct answer selecting it from among the listed choices of statements.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this Unit.

- 1) Public Relations aims to build a favourable opinion. This can be achieved by :
  - a) giving eloquent speeches;
  - b) increasing production;
  - c) genuine action and honest communications;
  - d) advertising.
- 2) Public Relations is described as a planned activity. This is because it involves :
  - a) budgeting;
  - b) reaching the target audience;
  - c) preparation of messages;
  - d) evaluation of public opinion;
  - e) all the above.

### **1.4.3 Role of Public Relations**

Having read so far, you may rightly feel like enquiring as to what, then, is the proper role of Public Relations in a democratic, agro-based, but industrialised society like India ? For what tasks may the Public Relations professionals lay claim?

In a developing society like India with vast size and population, linguistic diversity, culture, religion and innumerable ethnic groups coupled with illiteracy, ignorance, superstition, diverse beliefs and faiths, Public Relations assumes a greater significance as the government is socially accountable for its various policies and programmes. This is also vital for shaping public opinion. Public Relations help our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among various groups and institutions.

Public Relations serve a wide variety of institutions in society such as business, trade unions, Government agencies, voluntary agencies, foundations, hospitals, educational and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or “publics” such as employees, members, consumers, local communities, shareholders, other institutions and with society at large.

“Public Relations is the communication and interpretation of ideas and information to the publics of an institutions; the communication and interpretation of information, ideas, and opinions from those publics to the institution in the effort to bring the two into harmonious adjustment”.

The Public Relations professional, is a specialist in communication and in public opinion. Thus defined, Public Relations meets a vital need in democratic society — the need to bridge the gulf which separate those having mutual interests and common causes. This concept of Public Relations must be the inevitable response to the changing nature of Indian Society which is now transforming itself from a “mixed economy” to a capital and technology-driven “market economy”, increasingly becoming “privatised”.

#### 1.4.4 Public Relations as Management Function

Among the multitude of roles and functions that Public Relations performs, one of the most important is identifying the "public interest" and keeping the organisation informed about it. But, in the final analysis, determining what is public interest, is a decision for the management. This leads to the conclusion that Public Relations is a management function.

While this is a reasonable claim, it is often misconstrued leading to confusion and mistaken assumptions. Ms. Danny Griswood in her definition begins as, "Public Relations is the management function .....". G. Edward Pendray asserts "..... Public Relations is not only a management function; it may well be the heart and core of modern management". Such assertions, common among Public Relations people, start from a valid assumption, but often confuse the relationship of the Public Relations practitioner and the management he is employed to serve. The actions and policies of an organisation is determined by the policy makers. The confusion lies in locating the boundary line where the responsibility of the Public Relations practitioner ends and the management takes over the task of fixing policy and implementing it. This can cause a lot of friction.

Irrespective of where Public Relations fits into an organisation it is generally considered a STAFF rather than a LINE function. What do these terms mean? Line people are those who are carrying out that basic functions of the organisation while staff people are experts in policy planning and techniques which help supervise the line people do a better job of achieving and organisation's goals. In order to achieve this, management must make a continuous effort to understand the true role and status of Public Relations. It must accept Public Relations as a staff function and facilitate it to be more effective.

**This definition of Public Relations was formally adopted by the Public Relations Society of America Assembly on November 6, 1982.**

As a management function Public Relations encompasses the following :

- Anticipating, analysing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues which might affect, for good or ill, the operations and plans of organisations.
- Counselling management at all levels in the organisation with regard to policy decisions, courses of action, and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organisation's social or citizenship responsibilities.
- Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programmes of action and communication, to achieve informed public understanding, necessary to the success of an organisation's aims. These may include marketing, financial fund raising, employee, community or a government relations and other programmes.
- Planning and implementing the organisation's efforts to influence or change public policy.
- Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities — in short, managing the human resources to meet all of the above objectives and goals.

If public attitudes and opinions are negative or hostile toward organisational policies, procedures and actions, the Public Relations practitioner :

- can utilise its skills and resources in an attempt to change or modify public attitudes and opinions through communication.
- Public Relations can inform line authorities and top management about the negative or hostile public attitudes and opinions and subsequently attempt to change them. This is based on the assumption that Public Relations is an intelligence-gathering and communicating agency. It recognises that evaluation of public attitudes and opinions and subsequent communication with public as its important duties.

In this way, Public Relations is placed in the same category as personnel management, finance department, etc. It is the Public Relations function to provide skilled assistance and advice to management to and from its publics, internally and externally.

## 1.4.5 Limitations of Public Relations

Public Relations undoubtedly is an effective way to achieve smooth relationships, safeguard reputations, promote sales and build a corporate image. However, it should not be seen as a panacea for all ills. It is to be borne in mind that Public Relations can help to achieve recognition only when there is a matching performance. Public Relations efforts are not composed of stunts or gimmicks. It is not a magical remedy like a coat of white-wash applied to the soiled walls. It is not propaganda. It cannot afford to disregard ethics, truth or public good. It is not hollow publicity efforts directed at achieving sales. It is not also a fire alarm service that can help reverse a crisis because goodwill cannot be established overnight. Hence, Public Relations is a sustained long term sincere effort, which along with genuine performance and concern can earn public goodwill.

### Check Your Progress 3

**Note :** (i) Answer the following questions in the space provided.

(ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

- 1) Fill in the blanks with suitable words.
  - a) Mutual understanding can be promoted by a ..... communication.
  - b) The publics of an organisation have.....interests.
  - c) Public Relations is considered a ..... function.
  - d) Many human problems arise due to lack of .....
- 2) Read the following statements and say if they are true or false.
  - a) Public Relations cannot be called a management function.
  - b) Public Relations is the same as publicity.
  - c) Advertising is a tool of Public Relations.
  - d) Public opinion of an organisation consists of the views of its employees only.
  - e) Good Public Relations can achieve anything and solve all problems.
  - f) PRO cannot be expected to find time to listen to others.
  - g) PRO is likened to a catalyst.
  - h) Goodwill cannot be earned in a short while.

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## 1.5 PUBLIC RELATIONS — PUBLICS

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Public Relations and “Publics” are inseparable. Without publics there cannot be any Public Relations. What does the term “Publics” mean ?

To lump together 900 million of India under the umbrella term the “public” is to misconstrue and oversimplify the term. For the sake of convenience, practitioners prefer to segmentize publics into broad, general groups. These are terms referred to as employees, stock-holder, customer, and community publics. In precise terms, “a public may be defined as any group of people tied together, however loosely, by some common bond of interest or concern”, for example, the shareholders of a company.

In traditional Public Relations usage, Publics are divided into two categories — External and Internal.

External Publics are those outside an organisation that have some relationship to the organisation and can have widespread impact on its functioning, like government officials, the media, retailers, suppliers, customers, competitors, investors, bankers, local community organisations.

Internal Publics are those which an organisation most closely relates to — one that shares the institutional identity, such as the management, stock-holders, employees, dealers, sales representatives and other marketing personnel.

### **1.5.1 Nature of Organisation and its Publics**

As mentioned earlier, the nature of an organisation usually dictates its publics and one can draw some major distinctions applied to the nature of organisations and its publics.

- 1) Organisations with similar goals and purposes have similar publics. For instance, every daily newspaper in the country sustains itself by attracting readers and advertisers; hence, reading and advertising publics are basic publics for daily newspapers.
- 2) The unique nature of an organisation can often make its publics different from organisations which seem similar to it. For instance all colleges exist for the purpose of educating students, but some college admit only women like the Lady Shriram College for Women in New Delhi, some admit men too, like the St. Stephen's College, New Delhi. Some admit both men and women, like JNU. Some draw students from their immediate surroundings like the Delhi University while some draw students from the entire country like IGNOU or BHU or AMU. In each case, though, these institutions share the similar purpose of imparting education to students, the college in question may have publics vastly different from those of others.
- 3) As organisations change in nature and purpose, so do their publics. For instance, if a textiles manufacturing firm switches over to readymade garments, the nature of its publics also changes.
- 4) It should also be noted that there are publics within publics and many of them are hidden from you. These are in a latent state. As issues arise which affect them, these latent publics begin to stir, surface and organise. They may cause innumerable problems if their presence is not detected and steps not taken to handle them. For instance, book-sellers are the immediate public for a college. But the people who supply paper to these book-sellers form a latent public (hidden from view). Suddenly, due to government policy, there may be a crisis in the paper industry. These paper merchants may then create problems for the book-seller and therefore for the college indirectly.

### **1.5.2 Identification of Publics**

Public is amorphous, every changing and virtually infinite in number. Also, the multiplicity of publics can cause internal conflicts, as different publics have interests and needs. These conflicts cannot be easily resolved. For instance, the employees as a public are interested in knowing more about an organisation, its personnel policies, wage policies, incentives for the work force etc. The customers want to know the product range, quality of products, prices, after sales service, etc. What is true of the divergence of interests among these two publics, such as employees and customers, is also true of other publics.

The Public Relations practitioner must carefully identify each public pertinent to a particular project and determine other publics that might affect it. To achieve this, sometimes the Public Relations practitioner will have to undertake research to find out who these publics really are, what they think, and what they want, in order to communicate appropriate messages effectively. Also, Public Relations should not assign importance to major public alone. While it must gauge the majority opinion it must also consider the view point of the smaller or minor publics. Sometimes, the Public Relations practitioner has to study the psychographics — the emotional and behavioural characteristics that define each group. Psychographics generally show how one public may be similar to another in interest or actions.

The identification and segmentation of publics is an important step to effective and meaningful communication in Public Relations.

#### **Check Your Progress 4**

- Note :** i) Answer the following questions in the space provided below.
- ii) Check your answers with the ones provided at the end of this Unit.
- 1) Define the term "Public".

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 2) State if the following statements are True or False.
- a) An organisation can have several publics. ( )
  - b) Customers form the internal public of an organisation. ( )
  - c) Organisations with similar goals have similar publics. ( )
  - d) The publics of an organisation are constant and do not change. ( )
  - e) All the publics of an organisation have similar interests. ( )
  - f) The views of minor publics can be ignored. ( )

3) Choose the right answer from among the given answers to tally with the given statement.

The messages for different publics of the same organisations have to be framed differently because :

- i) it is better that they remain distant from each other.
- ii) their capacity to understand differs.
- iii) their interests and information needs are different.
- iv) they deserve different levels of treatment.

**Activity 1**

Visit a factory or any manufacturing unit close to your place. Find out about their activities / products etc. and identify the publics for this factory. (You may use the space given below.)

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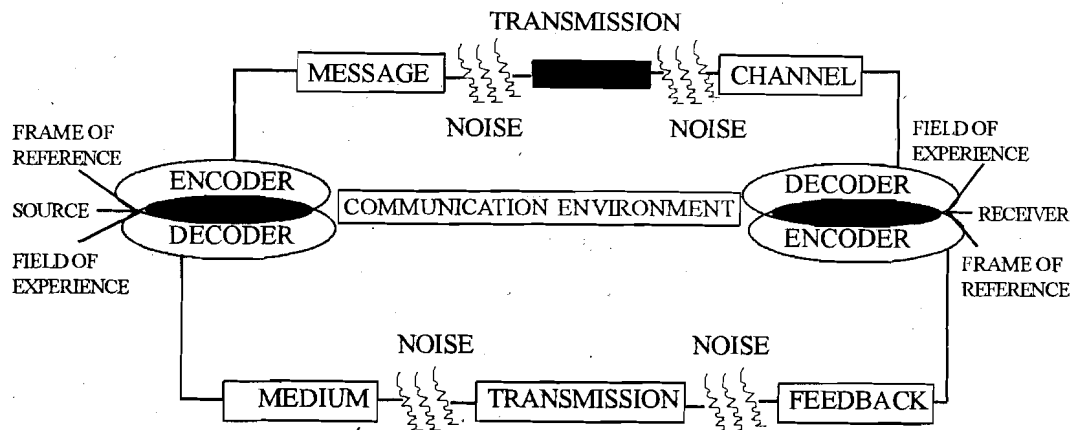
## 1.6 THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

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From what you have learnt till now, it must be clear that Public Relations practice is the continuing effort to effect a harmonious adjustment between an organisation and the various interests it serves. This can be achieved through two-way communication resulting in mutual understanding of each other's interests. In this process, the Public Relations practitioner plays the role of communicator, catalyst and counsellor.

Before we go any further let us take a look at the "Process of Communication" and the concept of "Two-way Communication".

### Process of Communication



Communication is the art and science of sending or transmitting message, information, ideas, emotions from one person to another and obtaining a feedback (reaction) of the message sent. This means that the act of "communication" involves at least these five elements:

- a) Source / Communicator (the sender of information)
- b) Context
- c) Message (use of symbols, like words, gestures)
- d) Channel ( a medium of transmission like voice, radio) etc.
- e) Receiver (one who receives and comprehends the message)
- f) Feedback (Response of the receiver to the message, transmitted back to the sender, through medium).

We have discussed these elements in detail in Course I Block I. You may like to refer back to Course I Block I.

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## 1.7 THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCESS

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Having understood the process of communication and the role of two-way communication, we shall now briefly look at the "Process of Public Relations".

Public Relations today involves complete analysis and understanding of all the factors that influence people's attitudes toward an organisation. This is achieved through what has been popularly called "Public Relation's Four-stage Process". The stages are :

- I) Fact-finding — research analysis of opinion, environment.
- II) Planning — policy formulation, programming, goal setting.
- III) Communication — implementing planned communication activities, execution.
- IV) Evaluation — feedback and adjustment/course modification.

You will be reading each of these steps in detail in the subsequent units.

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## 1.8 BENEFITS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Every institution and function fares in relation to the values it provides to others, rather than in merely pursuing its own gain. The primary benefits derived from public relations are :

- Public Relations is a means for the public to have its desires and interests felt by the institutions in our society. It interprets and speaks for the public to otherwise unre-

sponsive organisations. It also speaks on behalf of those organisations to the public to help create public acceptance and recognition.

- It helps promotion of a company's goods or services and builds up 'image'.
- Public Relations is a means to achieve mutual adjustment between institutions and groups, establishing smoother relationships that benefit the public.
- It can help to attract talented personnel for the organisation.
- Publication Relations is a safety valve for freedom. By providing means of working out accommodation it makes arbitrary action or coercion less likely.
- Public Relations is an essential element in the communication systems that enables individuals to be informed on many aspects of subjects that affect their lives. It can stimulate attitudes and bring about changes.
- Public Relations personnel can help activate the organisation's social conscience and thus foster the goodwill of community.
- It can help overcome public misconceptions about the organisation by disseminating correct information.
- It can help earn the goodwill of employees by showing interest in their welfare. Thus it may prevent labour problems and solve any disputes with greater ease.

Public Relations, consciously practised, is a universal activity. It functions in all aspects of life. Each of us, basically, practice principles of public relations in major areas for seeking the acceptance, co-operation, or affection of others. Public Relations professionals only practice it in a more professional manner.

**Check Your Progress 5**

**Note :** i) Answer the following questions as directed in the space provided.

ii) Check your answers with the ones provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Enumerate some benefits an organisation may derive from its Public Relations activities.

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2. State if the following statements are True or False.

- a) Public Relations person's role is only that of a source not of a receiver. ( )
- b) Fact finding must proceed planning. ( )
- c) It is not possible for a communicator to control 'noise' in communication. ( )
- d) The element of contact is important in communication. ( )
- e) Letters to the Editor column is an example of feedback. ( )
- f) The choice of channel depends on the audience to be reached. ( )

## 1.9 PUBLIC RELATIONS – TOOLS OF COMMUNICATION

The gamut of Public Relations operations are targeted towards diverse publics with varied information needs so as to help the publics have a right perspective of the organisations and its goal. The Public Relations practitioner works through the printed word, the spoken word and the image to communicate and interpret messages to the publics. Here we shall examine briefly the tools that can be used by the Public Relations person. They are House Publications, Letters and Bulletins, Bulletin Boards, Posters, Photographs and Billboards, Institutional advertising, Meeting, Speaker's Bureau, Public Address Systems, Films, Video and Slide Films, Displays and Exhibits, Visitors for Open House, Plant Tours, Staging Special Events, etc. Instead of listing targets strictly by publics, we shall group them according to the specialised media or other means of communication to reach them. Thus :

Public to be reached	Tools of Communication
Stockholders	Annual and interim reports, meetings
Financial Community (brokers, security, analysts)	Financial Publications Personal Meetings
Employees	House Journals, Bulletin Boards, Posters, Hand-bills, Target Charts, Letters, Video Films, Meetings.
Labour Unions	Bulletins and statements or policy.
Communities	Company Publications, Local Press, Radio and TV, Outlets, Local Group Meetings, Meetings with Opinion Leaders, Exhibitions.
Government	House Publications, Reports, Brochures, Booklets.
Trade Group	Through Trade Magazines.
Technical Group	Through Technical Magazines and Journals.
Competitors	Association Meetings, Direct Mail
Suppliers / Creditors	Credit & Banking Associations, Supplier's Meet.
Customers	Product Publicity Media, Press Releases, Advertising, POP Marketing, Direct Mail, Television Sponsored Programmes, Newspaper Cell etc.

### Activity 2

Examine a few issues of the newsletter or house journal of any organisation and analyse its contents.

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## 1.10 PR PROFESSIONALS — COPING WITH CHANGES

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Definition of Public Relations :  
Its Nature, Process and Public

It is increasingly being recognised that Public Relations require professional attitudes in India within the context of a rapidly changing social environment. As the institutions of government, industry, and politics intensify their concern with increasingly articulate and pre-occupied publics, the need for wish counsel and guidance is mandatory if the communications process is to be conducted with clarity.

It is encouraging that a growing number of PR practitioners are becoming aware of the social and political implications of their profession. The work of the Public Relations Society of India is beginning to bear fruit.

Another pointer to the growth of professionalism is that PR practitioners in India are developing "the problem-solving approach". This process requires that the PR professional be able to cope with not only the increasing degree of public awareness but also the advanced sophisticated communication technologies. To merit advanced status, to validate one's claims to deal with public opinion one cannot but function in a highly organised, professional manner and keep abreast of developing trends.

In the years ahead, Public Relations — and professionalism in Public Relations — are bound to increase. As the sophistication of the media grows, so must the ability of the PR persons increase to match the newer resources at their disposal. This is particularly true in this age of social transition. Since development in any sector, triggers off changes in many other sectors, the PR person is challenged as never before.

This growth of Public Relations and its obligations are a natural corollary to the great boom in electronic media which is staggering in its implications. New modes of communication are evolving rapidly. Cable television, satellite broadcasting, video and audio cassettes have become regular media of communication.

Newspapers and magazines are bringing out specialised columns to combat the pressures of television competition, special-interest publications particularly in business, finance and trade are booming.

It will demand the highest skills and creative imagination to choose the right medium and the right message and get it across to one's target audience in this highly competitive situation.

Besides coping with the new communication technologies, the PRO will need to possess ability to handle problems relating to environment, social conflict, international affairs, and the rising tensions that afflict our society at every turn.

A new age, of course, calls for talents and techniques appropriate to entirely new social situations, Public Relations professionalism must match the obligations with adequate resources. We are certainly on the road already but have a long way to go.

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## 1.11 LET US SUM UP

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The growing complexity of civilisation and increasing specialisation has created infinite number of groups and sub-groups in the society who have different identities but are dependent on each other. In order that these groups do not come into conflict with each other, it is important that they understand each other, PR communication acts as a link among these diverse groups.

Increase in education and corresponding rise in the level of public awareness has brought about the need to pay heed to the public opinion. Public opinion is a strong force that cannot be ignored. In a democratic way of functioning, organisations, institutions, political parties, business houses — all thrive only on the goodwill of the people. This, in turn, is the field of action for PR, to link various groups of publics through effective communication. PR, thus, seeks to create mutual understanding.

Various definitions have been given by different authors which highlight one or many activities or PR. PR can be said to encompass an array of activities, from the personal to the organisational levels, aimed at creating a favourable attitude in the minds of people.

PR functions differ from one organisation to another, depending on its purpose and its publics. The basic goal, however, is to attract public attention, win belief, achieve understanding and earn goodwill. This is achieved by a two-way communication process.

An organisation has several publics, *i.e.*, groups of people that it has to deal with in its functioning e.g., employees, shareholders, government, media, customers, suppliers etc. Publics form an integral part of Public Relations. It is important for a PR person to have a clear understanding of his organisation's publics and their attitudes in order to evolve suitable communication strategies.

PR functions through communication using a variety of media, tools and techniques e.g., reports, bulletin boards, house journals press releases, advertising, direct mail, radio and television, speeches, exhibitions etc. Selection of media depends on the publics to be reached and the kind of messages.

PR as a management process can be deemed to be a four-stage process which fills the communication gap between an organisation and its publics. It begins by finding out existing public opinion by researching, planning policies with public interest in mind, influencing communication activities, evaluating effect and modifying policies accordingly. These operations may be carried on for an organisation by the internal PR department or through hired services of an outside agency or even a combination of both.

The benefits of PR are manifold. From its ability to detect misconceptions, discontents etc., setting it right by necessary communication and promoting the public goodwill, PR functions in both preventive and curative capacity.

PR as a profession is slowly gaining recognition in India. In a rapidly changing environment both social and technological, the PR man's job is a challenging one that calls for creative talents and professional techniques.

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## 1.12 GLOSSARY

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<b>Ad</b>	:	Abbreviation for advertisement; generally display advertisement — persuasive material. It is paid for and therefore fully controlled in text, presentation, medium, and time by the sponsoring party.
<b>Booklet</b>	:	A printed piece of six or more pages with a proper cover prepared as a bound unit, usually by stapling.
<b>Brochure</b>	:	A printed piece of six or more pages. More elaborate than a booklet.
<b>Campaign</b>	:	An organised effort undertaken by an institution to convert the opinion of any group or groups on a subject of its immediate concern.
<b>Exhibition</b>	:	Visual display of an organisation's or institution's profile, history, performance and achievement or products.
<b>Folder</b>	:	A printed piece of four pages.
<b>Handout</b>	:	A written piece of information circulated as publicity release.
<b>House Journal</b>	:	A house magazine or a non-profitable, periodical publication which has a limited readership. It brought out by an organisations to communicate with these various publics chiefly employees.
<b>Attitude</b>	:	A predisposition or view, lightly held by a person about a person, object or idea. Attitudes are subject to change and can turn into an opinion (the more rigid form) with experience or through persuasion.
<b>Manual</b>	:	A compilation of direction and instructions in a book or booklet form.

<b>Media</b>	:	Avenues through which PR messages are transmitted e.g., Radio, TV, Newspaper.	<b>Definition of Public Relations : Its Nature, Process and Public</b>
<b>Media/Press Conference</b>	:	An invited gathering of newsmen arranged especially to communicate some information about the organisation.	
<b>Open House</b>	:	An event used as a tool by PRO to invite its publics to visit the organisation on a particular date, to see how it function.	
<b>Persuasion</b>	:	Means PR practitioners use most often to influence public opinion.	
<b>Propganda</b>	:	Efforts to reach people what to think, is often used to mislead.	

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## 1.13 SUGGESTED READING

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- Cutlip & Center : *Effective PR*, Prentice Hall, N.J. 1978.
- Sam Black : *Practical Public Relations* (Indian Reprint by Universal Book Stall, New Delhi (1973), 6th Reprint).
- Stephenson, Howard : *Handbook of Public Relations*, New York, Mcgraw Hill, 1971.

## 1.14 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : MODEL ANSWERS

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) a) Truth, knowledge and full information
- b) Public opinion
- c) Mutual understanding
- d) Sustained
- e) Public interests

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) c) 2) e)

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) a) Two-way b) differing c) staff d) communication
- 2) a) False b) False c) True
- d) False e) False f) False
- g) True h) True

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) "Public" is a group of people tied together, however loosely, by some common bond of interest or concern e.g., workers in a factory, students in a college etc.
- 2) a) True b) False c) False
- d) False e) False f) False
- 3) iii)

### Check Your Progress 5

- 1) PR helps to create public awareness, acceptance and recognition. It promotes mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. It can remove misconceptions, build an image, help to attract talented personnel, increased sales, bring about a change in attitude, and earn the public goodwill.

**Definition, Nature, Ethics and  
Scope of Public Relations**

- 2) a) False b) True c) False  
d) False e) True f) True